

Text: Gen. 14:17-24

Title: "The Superiority of the King of Kings"

Time: June 1, 2008 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: As signs of a lasting victory became apparent in Iraq in 2008, news agencies began to report that Al-Qaeda was trying to explain why they had been defeated in Iraq. One evening news story reported about the writings of someone known as "Doctor Fadl."

Fadl is an Al-Qaeda mastermind who is incarcerated in Egypt, but who has also begun to produce some influential writings that teach that Al-Qaeda has actually had it terribly wrong when it comes to jihad or holy war. He is now advocating some new rules in this regard, like it is wrong to target civilians, that it is God's will to move away from unbelievers rather than fight them, and that jihad is not required against an overwhelmingly superior enemy.

As Genesis 14 closes, Abram returns from a battle in which his small band and three allies defeated an overwhelmingly superior enemy. There was no need here to redefine the rules of conflict in terms of coexistence or retreat. The reason Abram won the victory he did is given to us in verse 20 of this passage. God had given Abram victory in battle, and now God allows Abram to personally meet the cause of his victory. Abram comes to understand in a new way the superiority of the King of kings and Lord of lords through the person of Melchizedek.

The Bible is clear that Melchizedek and the Son of God belong to the same priestly order (Ps. 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"). In addition, the Bible assigns

Melchizedek a superiority that equals the superiority of Christ over mere mortal men (Heb. 7:4-8).

For these reasons, I believe that Genesis 14 tells us about a Christophany. A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God (Micah 5:2; John 1:18). Where man sees God, he is seeing an appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God.

The man Christ Jesus was more than a mere appearance of the second person of the Trinity. He was the God-man incarnate. Melchizedek was not the God-man; he was a revelation of the Son of God in human form. In this sense, Melchizedek was “made like the Son of God” (Heb. 7:3). He is called a *man* in the same sense that angels are called *men* in the Bible (Heb. 7:4, Acts 1:10, Luke 24:4). This Christophany was in human form.

We would never say of Jesus Christ that He was “made like the Son of God.” No, Jesus Christ is the Son of God become man; Melchizedek is the Son of God appearing as a man, or in human form, one made like the Son of God. This is not the only time the Son of God reveals Himself in human form in this way (Gen. 18:1-2). With that theological backdrop, we will note three things about the superiority of this King of kings.

I. The aid of the King of kings is superior to the aid of earthly kings (Gen. 14:17, 21-22).

Illustration: We have this terrible situation going on in Myanmar right now. Tens of thousands of people are dying because a government refuses to allow the people access to Western aid. Their desire is to keep the people in bondage to themselves and free from Western influence.

Application: As Abram returns from battle he faces an enemy that in some ways is more deadly than even the armies of the five kings were.

The old Irish commentator Charles Henry Mackintosh expresses this truth admirably: "It frequently happens that immediately after a victory, one has to encounter a fresh temptation. Thus it was with Abraham. . . . 'The king of Sodom' presents a very different thought, and exhibits a very different phase of the enemy's power, from what we have in 'Chederlaomer and the kings that were with him.' In the former, we have rather the hiss of the serpent; in the latter, the roar of the lion" (I:157).

These are the words of a Bible student who has learned to recognize two kinds of spiritual dangers – the fiery darts of the wicked one and the schemes of the devil. We must be ready for both in the Lord's strength.

Abram was ready for the temptation of a ruinous transaction with the king of Sodom because he had met the King of kings who represents the Most High, El Elyon, Possessor of Heaven and Earth. We do not need the help of the enemy, the riches of deceit, nor the advantage of compromise with sin and disobedience, because our reliance is on Someone who is superior to anyone else we might rely on. Because the glory of the Possessor of Heaven and Earth filled Abram's vision, goods of the king of Sodom were not attractive to him.

What applied to Abram as a child of God was a higher standard than what applied to those who do not know the Lord (v. 24). I think Mackintosh has a wonderful insight into why this is so: "Abraham refuses to be enriched by the king of Sodom. How could he think of delivering Lot from

the power of the world if he himself were governed thereby? The only true way in which to deliver another is to be thoroughly delivered myself. So long as I am in the fire, it is quite impossible I can pluck another out of it. The path of separation is the path of power, as it is also the path of peace and blessedness" (I:159).

II. The realm of the King of kings is superior to the realm of earthly kings (14:18; Heb. 7:2).

Illustration: Here in Heb. 7:2, our author shows us something of the importance of a good translation. I am glad that we have them in our church this evening. He translates the meaning of the name Melchizedek. It was not enough that one merely knows that this person's name was Melchizedek, we also need to translate Melchizedek to know over what this person was king.

Melech = king; tsedeq = righteousness; so Melchizedek was the king of righteousness. In addition, the translation of Salem is peace, so Melchizedek is also the king of peace. Because the author of Hebrews translated these Hebrew words, he was able to discover some important truth about the realm of this King of kings and Lord of lords.

Application: The King of kings has laid claim to the realm of righteousness and the realm of peace. This is the realm of the heart. Those who are subjects of the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace belong to a kingdom that is not yet of this world. It is for now the realm of the heart.

As the Priest of God Most High, Possessor of Heaven and Earth, the realms of the kings of the world will be His one day too, but they are not now. As the King of Righteousness and Peace, holding jurisdiction over the realm of the needs

of the heart and soul, Jesus Christ can meet the needs of our hearts as no one else can.

We are sinners, and we need the King's righteousness. We are rebels at war with God, others, and even ourselves, and we need the King's peace. He can meet these needs of the heart and mind as nothing else can, try as we may.

Do you have this king ruling over your heart? If not, you are yet in your sin, not His righteousness, and you cannot know His peace. You need to bend the knee before the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace and ask Him to make you righteous and to give you peace. He died in your place and is risen again so that these blessings of salvation can be yours.

III. The priesthood of the King of kings is superior to the priesthood of Abram (14:18-20; the priesthood of Abraham is the Levitical priesthood, Heb. 7:4-10).

Illustration: Have you ever felt the frustration of dealing with someone who was unable to take a hint? Subtlety is often a test of our sensitivity, isn't it? I have told my baseball team that we have two goals for the season this year: team and work. Now the establishment of these grand themes for the season should preclude having to specifically scold players for specific acts of selfishness and laziness. I've tried to say "be a team" rather than "stop being selfish so-and-so," and "work hard" rather than "why did you quit on the play so-and-so." But some of my kids are not very good at taking a hint. Their sensibilities are not tuned to pleasing the coach.

Application: I believe that we meet an obvious hint with the appearance of Melchizedek that tests our spiritual sensitivity as we study this passage. But I have been surprised at

how many good commentators seem unable to take the hint.

The passage talks about two gifts. Abram's gift to Melchizedek was the tithe, an act of worship, the lesser showing appreciation for the greater.

But the gift of Melchizedek was far greater than the tenth that Abram gave. Just before we are told of the priesthood of Melchizedek, we are told that he gave Abram bread and wine, the two components of Scripture's object lesson of the cross. The gift of Melchizedek was bread and wine, not because everyone was hungry (they had eaten already, v. 24), but because they symbolized the gift of broken body and shed blood that the Son of God would give for the salvation of Abram's soul.

This was Melchizedek's revelation to Abraham. This was the foundation of His blessed position before God Most High. This was not a gift of 10%. It was a gift of everything the Son of God had. His gift was far superior to Abram's gift because it was a far greater sacrifice; and that same gift has been given to us as something far superior than anything we could possibly give Him. We ought to give Him our all, and yet even that still does not come close to how He gave His all to save us from our sin.

As important as the acts of worship were, which Abram performed before Yahweh, God Most High, the apostle Paul makes clear in Romans 4 that the most important response to the gift of Christ is the response of faith that Abram has in Gen. 15:6.

Because the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace died for you and me, we can trust that work for our salva-

tion and be saved. God did not count the tithe to Abram's righteousness; He counted Abram's faith to Abram's righteousness.

Do you have the righteousness and peace available in the King of kings today? If not, you can ask the King to do for you what you cannot do yourself, to take your sin and give you His righteousness, to take your troubled soul and give you His peace. Believe on the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man revealed in the person of Melchizedek, and you will be saved.

Conclusion: Earthly kings offer their aid. The help of Christ is better. Earthly kings boast about the borders of their realm. The realm of Christ, the human heart, is more important. Earthly religions bring their gifts to God. The gift of Christ, His broken body and His shed blood, can alone save man from sin.

Charles H. Spurgeon [on Ps. 20:7, "Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God"]: "Contrasts frequently bring out the truth vividly, and here the church sets forth the creature-confidences of carnal men in contrast with her reliance upon the Prince Immanuel and the invisible Jehovah. 'Some trust in chariots, and some in horses.' Chariots and horses make an imposing show, and with their rattling, and dust, and fine caparisons, make so great a figure that vain man is much taken with them; yet the discerning eye of faith sees more in an invisible God than in all these. . . . Alas, how many in our day who profess to be the Lord's are as abjectly dependent upon their fellow-men or upon an arm of flesh in some shape or other, as if they had never known the name of Jehovah at all. Jesus, be thou alone our rock

and refuge, and never may we mar the simplicity of our faith. 'We will remember the name of the Lord our God.'"

That is a wonderful way to say, "Let's remember the superiority of the King of kings."

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching